#TweetingInClass:

An Educational Approach to Social Media

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Over the past decade, social media has evolved into a communication powerhouse, allowing billions of people to produce, edit, and obtain information about an infinite amount of topics. Although sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and tumblr. are generally used for recreational purposes, there has been a recent trend of incorporating these sites into the modern classroom. In William Kist’s article, [“Class, Get Ready to Tweet: Social Media in the Classroom,”](http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ991339.pdf) the author explores four major realms of social media and provides examples of how they can be effective educational tools.

In his article, Kist first highlights the benefits of using blogs, wikis, Twitter, and Facebook in the classroom in order to better engage students in learning. Blogs, for example, allow students to take a multi-media approach to presenting information. Students can present information in the form of text, video, and audio files; the format also allows for information to be interactive, as students are able to comment on each other’s blog postings. Wikis are similar to blogs, yet the whole class can have the option to upload and edit information. Wikis can also be shared with classes in different countries, allowing teachers to add an international dimension to lessons. Teachers can also use Twitter to their advantage by creating original hashtags (the author uses “#KistAmerLitPeriod2” as an example) about a particular topic that students are learning about in class (Kist 2013). Once students log on to Twitter, they can use the search feature to find out what their classmates are saying about that particular hashtag and respond accordingly. Facebook can also be integrated into the curriculum if teachers utilize the option to create a “group” for the class that students can join. These groups could serve as a platform for students to share information or receive updates about classroom events.

Kist has a very positive attitude about incorporating these various forms of social media in the classroom. He understands that the world we live in is driven by technology and that it is important for students to develop skills that will help them succeed in the 21st Century. Kist sees the incorporation of social media in classrooms as a way to break the “education system out of a very old paradigm of teaching and learning” and actively engage students in the learning process (2013). However, in order for this to be completed successfully, Kist believes that educators must communicate with parents early and often about the process that they will be using. Parents often find it hard to believe that sites such as Twitter and Facebook can have any educational purpose and also question the safety and security of those sites. According to the author, there are many ways teachers can reach out to squelch these apprehensions including: inviting parents to actively participate by joining class blogs or virtual discussions, providing time at PTA meetings to discuss the role of technology in the classrooms, or utilizing sites such as Edmodo or Moodle that share similar features as popular social media sites but have purpose that is more catered towards schools.

When I first came across this article, I did not think that using social media in the classroom could be very beneficial. However, Kist’s explanation of how each type of media could be used effectively to engage students has convinced me that I should definitely utilize these tools. I think that using blogs and wikis is a wonderful way for students to demonstrate their content knowledge as well as practice their technology skills. Another thing that is great about those formats is that they can be used by students of all ages. I have worked in a second grade class in which the students had a daily assignment to log on to their personal blog and respond to discussion questions that their teacher had posted about information they had recently covered. I also love the fact that blogs and wikis open the door for students to interact with students from around the world. I think that promoting cultural awareness is one of the most critical things that teachers can do in order to help their students become global citizens. Although I appreciated all of Kist’s tips, I think I was most intrigued by his method of incorporating Twitter into the classroom. I think that creating a specific hashtag really helps the children focus on the topic they are studying and also presents the information in a fun way. It also helps students practice their editing and word selection skills since their responses have to be less than 140 characters. Kist also offered very useful information on how to approach parents about using social media in the classroom; once teachers are able to communicate their ideas to parents, the whole learning process can become more interactive and enjoyable for students, teachers, and parents. Overall, I think that this article is very beneficial for prospective teachers such as myself because it provides useful information on how to incorporate things that students are already familiar with into an academic setting. I will definitely be investigating each of these social media platforms more, and I plan to use them in my classroom.

# **References**

Kist, W. (2013) Class get ready to tweet: Social media in the classroom. *Our Children: The National PTA Magazine*, *38*(3), 10-11. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ991339.pdf>.